



U.S. Small Business Administration
Seattle District Office

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U.S. Small Business Administration Announces Western Washington Small Business Winners for 2002

January 22, 2002 (Seattle, Washington) – The Seattle District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration has announced the Western Washington Small Business Person and Advocate winners for 2002. Alice Cunningham, founder and owner of Olympic Hot Tub Company, in Seattle has been named Western Washington Small Business Person of the Year.

Winners of the seven small business advocate awards are as follows: Accountant Advocate, Patricia Schmick, Enrolled Agent in Federal Way; Entrepreneurial Success, Adrian Lugo, LUGO Construction in Fife; Financial Services Advocate, Elizabeth Rusnak of Banner Bank in Kirkland; Minority Small Business Advocate, Regina L. Glenn of Pacific Communications Consultants in Bellevue; SBA Young Entrepreneurs, Robert Meredith and Duke Pham of Matrix Global Services in Bellevue; Small Business Journalist, Kimberly A. Hilden, *The Herald Business Journal* in Everett; Veteran Small Business Advocate, John H. Witham of Worksource Cowlitz in Kelso, and Women In Business Advocate, Ruth Ann Halford of Community Capital Development in Seattle.

“We are extremely proud of all our award winners. A panel of judges selected each based on several criteria, such as staying power, growth in number of employees, increase in sales or volume, innovation, response to adversity, and evidence of contributions to community-oriented projects, depending on the award category,” said Michèle Liebes, SBA Seattle District Office public information officer. “Our Western Washington State award winners will now compete for state, regional, and national awards which will be announced in several weeks. We look forward to honoring our winners at an awards gala to be held in Seattle on April 18.” National winners in each of

the award categories will be announced by the President in special ceremonies to be held at the White House in connection with National Small Business week.

Alice Cunningham and her husband, Blair Osborn, founded Olympic Hot Tub Company in 1977; it is the oldest spa and hot tub company in the Northwest. With retail stores in Seattle, Fife, and Everett, and a sales and service center in Tukwila, the company employs 30 and has a customer base of over 12,000 in the greater Puget Sound and Southeast Alaska. Cunningham is responsible for sales and marketing for the company.

Upon hearing that she had won the SBA award, Alice Cunningham said, “We are so honored to receive this award from the SBA. Our thanks and appreciation go to our employees, without whom we would not be where we are today. When the employees know the company has the respect of the community and that the job we do is considered the best anywhere, the sense of pride in the company is tremendous. That sense of pride then comes through in every interaction with customers.” Cunningham added, “The primary lessons I have learned in business are to earn customers’ trust by exceeding their expectations, and to hire good people and treat them well.”

The annual SBA awards competition is held in conjunction with National Small Business Week, which the President declares as a special opportunity to honor the nation’s small business owners. This year Small Business Week will be celebrated May 6 – 10.

The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. In the Pacific Northwest, the SBA’s five district offices have a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans totaling approximately \$2 billion.

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